

After an interval of over half a century, in the dawn of the year 1859, the threatening condition of affairs in France, and the United States, the war in China and the Indian Mutiny, taxed the resources of the country to the uttermost, while at home an inadequate small reserve of militia was all that could be counted upon. A feverish anxiety about the security of the island took possession of many minds; indeed for many years there had been an uneasy feeling in the country that its defences were in an unsatisfactory state. In Scotland all traces of the volunteers of 1802, except the memory of them, had passed away, and in 1859 the government utilised the ardent feeling of the nation to create a defensive force of ordinary citizens of the middle class. As if by magic an armed force rose up.

In October, 1859, a number of leading townsmen of Irvine, consisting of professional men and others, addressed a requisition to Provost Thomas Campbell, to call a public meeting of the inhabitants to consider the propriety of forming a rifle or artillery corps within the burgh. The lords-lieutenant of counties had been authorised by the Crown to submit proposals for the formation of volunteer artillery corps in maritime towns, where batteries might be manned for the protection of the coast, and of rifle corps. The Volunteer movement, which began by a popular impulse, became a great national organisation, and the poet laureate—Tennyson--did his best to rouse it into activity in verses of doubtful merit. The members undertook to provide their own arms and equipment, and to defray all expenses attending the corps, except in the event of its being assembled for actual service. It soon became evident that men of the artisan class would be unable to give their services free unless arms and equipment were provided for them, and accordingly a large and influential general committee was appointed in Irvine to secure subscriptions. On account of the advantages offered in respect of the local position and proximity to the coast for the practice of gunnery, and owing to the more liberal encouragement promised by the government to artillery volunteers, it was resolved, though not without some dissent, to form an artillery corps instead of a rifle one. The meeting was swayed to some extent in favour of the former project by the fact that Mr. Patrick Boyle of Shewalton had intimated his preference for it, and had offered to give gratuitously as much of his land in the neighbourhood of the seashore as it would be required for the formation of a battery of garrison guns. At subsequent meetings, there being a considerable minority in favour of also equipping a rifle corps, it was decided, in addition, to establish a rifle company. "*Defence and not defiance* " was adopted as the motto of the force, and everywhere those in a position to head public efforts or to lead public opinion took up enthusiastically the task of organisation for the defence of hearth and home. The patriotic inhabitants of Irvine and the county gentlemen were generous in their subscriptions, and the sum of £83 17s. was handed to the artillery and £68 2s. to the rifles. One of the old maiden ladies of the town on being solicited for her subscription answered right sturdily, " I'll dae nae sic thing; I ne'er could raise a man for *myself*, and I'm no ga'in to raise men for the queen."

The master-tailors of Irvine were given the opportunity of providing the corps with uniform, which in regard to the artillery was a blue tunic with red collar, cuffs, and piping, edged all round with black braid with four rows of the same on the breast, blue trousers with black stripe with red piping, finished off with a blue peaked cap with black lace and scarlet piping, and silver grenade in front, and a black patent leather waist-belt.

The Volunteer dandies of 1859 did not desire to be mistaken for regular soldiers, and so each Volunteer Corps was dressed in a uniform of different pattern and facings. The Rifle Company's first, uniform was a medium gray, adorned with ribs of black braid,